

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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1. In a cable television network system that connects set-top boxes (STBs) to receive broadcast program content from cable network head end distribution points, a method for delivery of a promotional content stream comprising the steps of:

cueing a promotional content stream at a video-on-demand (VOD) server to be played on a VOD channel for a particular STB, the VOD server located at a cable network head end;

sending a first trigger to the particular STB indicating the VOD channel number, but which does not cause the STB to yet switch to the VOD channel;

sensing a commercial cue tone signal in a broadcast channel being watched at the STB, the commercial cue tone indicating an upcoming start of commercial segment; sending a second trigger to cause the STB to switch to the VOD channel indicated by the first trigger; and

beginning playback of the promotional content stream.

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2. A method as in claim 1 wherein the STB stores a channel number being watched prior to playback of the promotional content stream, and returns to the stored channel number once the promotional content stream ends.

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3. A method as in claim 1 wherein pixelation that may occur during channel switchover to the VOD channel is blanked at the STB.

4. A method as in claim 1 wherein channel information is displayed during switchover to the VOD channel.